

Between Bubbles and Enclaves Discussing a new working term to interculturalism and meaning via a case study of Israeli women in Brussels

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Abstract: Changing one's place of residency creates new challenges, such as how to preserve social, cultural, ethnic or national identities and how to create a comfortable living environment in the new country; creating a new 'home.' In this article I explore ways in which migrant women transform a new place into a space, into a new home. More specifically, this article answers the question of the mechanisms used by Israeli women who immigrated to Belgium in order to create a setting wherein they feel a sense of comfort and belonging. I call this mechanism 'social bubbles', a term taken from Cohen (1992) in his work about types of tourists. Cohen named it 'environmental bubbles'. My aim is to develop the use of the term for general migration.

Looking at a religious group is often discussed in terms of 'enclaves' (Sivan, 1991; Valins, 2003). Enclaves are social forms where people live completely within the boundaries of the group. Individuals are not obliged to remain in the community (in the enclaves) but there is social pressure to do so. I compare the term 'enclave' with 'social bubble' and explain that the use of the term is more flexible, dynamic and leads to a new perspective on the whole phenomenon of integration of social groups: religious, ethnic, national and for different migration purposes; asylum seekers, expatriates, refugees and others.

Although the concept of bubbles could describe social groups, such as Jewish people in Brussels, Belgium, this article focuses mainly on Israelis who immigrated to Brussels.

Keywords: enclaves, bubbles, affiliation, migration, gender

Background

The research on which this article is based took place between 2008 and 2013. The research looks at three groups of women living in Brussels: Israelis, Belgian Jewish and Jewish women from other countries. The main topics of

the research are identities of women in times of social change and the creation of a sense of belonging in a foreign country. I used participatory observation and in-depth interviews for anthropological research. In this article I focus mainly on Israeli migrant women but comparison with other Jewish women is sometimes inevitable.

This article is divided into two main parts, explaining two different mechanisms for creating a sense of belonging: the first part looks at the life of Israelis in Brussels and focuses on the relationship between Israeli and Belgian Jewish women; the creation of the 'social bubbles' as a way of creating a positive and a strong social identity. The second part focuses on the sense of belonging of Israeli women via cultural artefacts, for example, mass media, literature, food and so on. It exhibits the lives of women in the Bubbles.

Enclaves or Bubbles?

In the following part I introduce the term 'social bubbles' and develop it further to understand integration of individuals in a new place. To start with I discuss the concept of enclaves and more specifically I answer why it is difficult to apply 'enclaves' to secular religious groups such as Israelis and Jews in Brussels. Developing the concept is yet another tool for describing further relationships and forms of integration of social, ethnic, national or religious groups in a new place.

What are enclaves?

Mary Douglas, in 'The Cultural Theory' suggests that in social relations, common cultural ideas should be constructed in a way that everyone can make his way through constraints they encounter in life, so that the world the individual lives in will make sense and be logical to him. Mary Douglas found two constraints that influence social relationships: the first one is 'group'-constraints of incorporation; the extent to which people, in their relationship, are limited to their social responsibilities in respect of the human group. The second one is 'grid'-constraints of classifications that dictate a person how to conduct his relations with others (not with who) as the category to which they belong to (sex, colour, age, official rank, etc.). Mary Douglas has integrated the dimensions and created a typology for analysis and comparison. This typology consists of three main social contexts, each of which carries a specific cultural baggage. The three types are the following: hierarchy, market and enclaves. In this article I focus on enclaves.

Enclaves are usually an answer to a problem that a community has regarding its boundaries. Generally, the term is used to describe social groups, such as fundamental religious groups (Sivan, 1991) or orthodox groups (Valins, 2003). The future of the enclave depends very much on its members' willingness to

remain members, as a community cannot prevent people from leaving. The only way a community in the enclave can restrain the outer boundaries is by moral persuasion. There might be differences among members of the community but the fear of weakening the external border blurs these differences.

Sivan (1991) discusses enclaves in fundamentalist groups in the three big religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The religious enclave is a social network that provides interaction with other members. There is solidarity of members in the group that compensates for the demands of a strict timetable and rigid norms. Time is an aspect that controls the life of community members: prayers, holidays, religious events, yearly, monthly and daily demands and so on. Space is another demanding aspect in the enclave. As a direct result of religious demands, individuals tend to live within a close distance from religious institutions due to different religious requirements. This leads to spatial separation. In addition, separation is made through behavioural codes that include body language, dress codes, haircuts, names and the strict following of religious obligations (Sivan, 1991; Valins, 2003). Individuals in an enclave attach themselves high moral standing and distinguish what they perceive as impure, filthy and dangerous. The threat that individuals might leave the enclave is more pronounced when the society outside the enclave shares the same tradition as the one inside (i.e. fundamental Jews in Israel such as Neture iKarta). Group members use different strategies to achieve positive social identity. When individuals feel part of their group, "they create, maintain and enhance distinctiveness of inter-group members compared to out-of-group members" (Turner, 2000:8) and they feel a stronger commitment to the group (Stets & Burke, 2000: 225). Individuals tend to compare their group favourably, which contributes to a positive social identity. In orthodox communities, individuals might face social control, such as gossip, conflicts, disagreements and even expulsion and therefore they perceive positively their group in contrast to the negative views individuals have of the other groups. Valins (2003), in a case study of a Jewish Ultra-Orthodox community, discusses the methods used by members in the community to keep their religious identity. He uses the term "stubborn identity" to describe ways a religious community upholds the strong identity of its members.

Valins explains that religion has an important meaning in constructing the boundaries that define "us" and "them". This goes in line with the research of Longman (2007, 2008) on the Jewish Ultra-Orthodox community of Antwerp and others on Ultra-Orthodox communities. Similar to what Sivan (1991) discussed, individuals in these communities feel that they have a special promise, moral and pure, that the outer community does not have, according to their perception and their wish to keep it. In Manchester, the Ultra-Orthodox community constructs boundaries to separate themselves from the

outside society. The community defines itself by limiting interaction with non-Ultra-Orthodox society, by creating welfare programs or by resistance to secular media and different styles of dress, for example. This secures their identity from the outside world. In the description of Longman (2007), we can learn about the ways a control of female sexuality, praxis and behaviour reshapes the boundaries of the community and defines who is “in” and who is “out”.

When describing an Ultra-Orthodox community, the term *enclave* as discussed above can be used. It is almost clear to visualise the creation of boundaries and the recreation of identity. One example Valins uses for boundaries in enclaves is the “Eruv” that creates a private space within a public one. The Eruv symbolises the inner part of a community. Symbolically, it creates ‘home’.

I believe that using this term ‘enclaves’ for the topic of migration referring to ethnic or religion groups is very rigid. In Brussels where the Jewish community is mainly secular there is no ‘Eruv’, individuals are not dressed in a particular way and there are not many restrictions that oblige individuals to live within a certain neighbourhood. The creation of home, a sense of belonging and a symbolic “us” is done in different ways as is developed further in this article. I suggest looking at the process of ‘gathering’ in social groups in a different way: *social bubbles*.

What is a social bubble?

Stalker (1994) emphasised that not all immigrant groups will go into enclaves. Professionals, for example, normally choose their location more by social class. This emphasis of Stalker brings to the thought that a new way of looking at integration of immigrants and social groups is needed. Professionals do not search for enclaves to join, but they join social bubbles.

The term ‘bubble’ is used to describe the enclosure of a group of people from other groups within the same country. In 1972, Cohen coined the term “environmental bubble” in his article about the four types of tourists. For Cohen an important element in the tourists’ experience is novelty and strangeness. Individuals who travel differ from each other by the intensity of their travel experience. Not all individuals are able to immerse themselves in a new society. When the surroundings are too strange, the individual searches for familiarity and a comfortable place; food, newspapers, another person who reminds him of home and so on. This security of a familiar place is called a *microenvironment*, the accustomed environment on foreign soil. In the bubble, the individual interacts and functions in his own habitat. Cohen did not extend the term nor develop it further to other sorts of migration and it is not in widespread use in academic literature. In this article I take this

challenge but I name the construction of the familiarity place a '*social bubble*' because I think that social elements in the bubble are crucial for the development of environmental bubble.

Social bubbles are actually social networks that are separated from other social networks or from the whole society in a particular place. Bubbles demonstrate relationships between groups of people as a whole. There are four types of relationships between bubbles: the first relationship is 'no touch'; bubbles are one next to each other, yet separate. There is no contact between members of the inner group (in the bubble) and the external one. It is very rare that individuals exclude themselves completely from any cultural or social connections but still this phenomenon exists in some fundamental communities or sects. The second form of relationship is 'touching edges'; bubbles are touching each other on the surface. There is contact between individuals of both groups. In many cases these contacts are in a supermarket or at school. In this form, relationships are at a very shallow level. The third form of relationship is when there is a greater contact between the two groups. Relationships could be at school, at a worship place and so on. There is mutual exchange and in some cases even social relationship between members of the different bubbles. The fourth form is of bubbles within bubbles. This form refers mainly to individuals that are part of both groups. They have meaningful relationships in both groups and switch from one group to another. One example for this form of relationship is among 'mixed couples' if one of the partners belongs to one of the other groups. The term bubble is further developed via the case study of Israelis living in Brussels.

Israeli and Jewish Bubbles:

Israelis and Belgian Jews in Brussels live, generally speaking, in two quasi-separated bubbles. The Israeli 'bubbles' consists of three main groups of Israelis. The first group are Israelis who come to Belgium due to their partner's work. In this group Israelis remain mainly among other Israelis; contacts with Belgian Jews are limited. The second group are single Israelis who came to study or to work; this group is like what Cohen (1972) describes 'the explorer'. They search for contact in the general Belgian society but will go back to their bubble when they search for 'a comfort zone'. The third group comprises Israelis who are married to a Belgian partner. In this group individuals try to live in both cultures. In most cases, they learn the language and customs of the place but they choose what to adopt.

Interviewed Israelis tend to socialise mainly with other Israelis. The important Identity component is being an Israeli, having either been born in Israel or born elsewhere and immigrated to Israel. They feel temporary in Belgium and have a general plan to return to Israel at a certain stage.

Searching for familiarity

When people migrate to other countries they search for the known and for the places where they feel accepted and belong. There are many studies about the relationship between Israelis living abroad and the Jewish community in different countries of residency (Rocker, 2008; Lev-Ari, 2008; Cohen, 2011; Brent, 2009). As in many cases, Israelis do not feel part of the Jewish community, they create social bubbles of similarity where they share a connection to near or far past. In the bubble, they feel protected from the strangeness of the new environment where, in many cases, they do not feel fully integrated. The bubble allows an entry to a known place, to familiar surroundings. Entering the bubble for Cohen (1972) is when the experience of the individual becomes too foreign or when it is prolonged.

Inbal, 40 years old, explains:

Ever since I came to Brussels I have been looking for the familiar and the secured. I'm very sensitive. I'm constantly looking for the familiar. It's not for nothing that I said that even the trees are different. The environment is different. Even the colour of the sky is different; there is a red light of sunset that we do not have here. One needs familiar things: music, it makes the experience deeper. These are flashes that take you back to your childhood, to the souvenirs.

In addition, Israeli women describe a feeling of acceptance when they join an Israeli bubble:

Keren, a 49-year old woman, describes relationships with other Israelis upon arrival:

It's a place to meet, for people like me who come to meet, to know, to get information over a cup of coffee. Two weeks after I arrived I met a woman who told me to come to a morning gathering. It was a wonderful thing. I was so excited that she asked me to come. It was so important and very pleasant for me [...] this way I could meet everyone together. It was very nice; after that I saw the faces at school, familiar faces [...]

In the bubble itself, smaller social groups are created and there is mutual help; Israeli migrants report that Israelis who already live in Belgium help new migrants with different aspects of their lives, such as grocery shopping, finding certain shops, finding work for them or for the children, helping in finding doctors or giving helpful information. In some cases it opens a door for them to meet other Israelis. Abdulrahim (1993) exhibits similar tendencies among Lebanese women in Germany. When women migrated from Lebanon to Germany they received a lot of help from women who were already in Germany.

Place:

Migrants face new experiences and new situations that demand a rethink of the world that surrounds them. When a migrant arrives, they stand at a meeting point between cultures, ideas, values, identities and more. For some people it is important to maintain their identity. Valins (2003) shows that in certain religious communities, like those of the Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Broughton Park, Manchester, religious identity is very strong and the community does all it takes to keep their religious identity, values and culture. Maintaining a religious identity in this case is done by physical and symbolic separation. Longman (2007, 2008) describes similar tendencies among Ultra-Orthodox women in Antwerp. Religious obligations create symbolic boundaries for women who work in a non-Jewish environment.

One change that occurs as a result of mobility is a change in the notion of 'home' or, more specifically, the relationship to places, both the one they left and the new place of residence. In most cases, upon arrival, migrants seek ways to create a place to be called 'home'. For Easthope (2009), home is a "place that provides feelings of love and belonging for individuals and groups". Home can form feeling of exhilaration. Being familiar with a place leads to feelings of belonging and an attachment which influences social identity, for example, in a form of a homeland (Easthope, 2009). Migrants tend to have dual feelings towards the place; they feel 'here' and 'there'. In order to feel at home, 'here', they tend to enter a bubble.

Another aspect of the place is the environment of residence. Sivan (1993) and Valins (2003) explain that members of the communities in the enclaves remain in a limited place of residence. For Ultra-Orthodox Jews the reason is mainly due to rigid religious demands, such as the prohibition to drive a car on Saturdays, which results in living within walking distance from a synagogue. In some cases, a symbolic separation, like Eruv, is applied. Bubbles are more flexible for a place of residency. The secular Jewish community of Brussels spreads all over Brussels, Waterloo, Rhodes St. Genèse, Alesberg and other areas around Brussels. As the community at large is more secular, there is no need for Jews to live within walking distance of a synagogue. Boundaries are flexible and more symbolic than fixed. In such an environment, other measures should be taken in order to form a social bubble. These measures are described further in the next section.

Boundaries:

Defining the borders of ethnic cultural groups is dynamic and influenced by temporal and historical aspects (Mittelberg & Waters, 1992). In the bubble, by making and remaking the sense of identity and belonging, a differentiation

between 'us' and 'them' is made. The boundaries of the bubble are transparent and reinforce the feeling of each group that "we are not them". Individuals can see but also can be seen. In the bubble everyone is free to leave since the only control is personal: the need to belong to a community.

In contrast, boundaries of the enclaves are theoretically open but the inner group does its utmost to control the exit of its members by using gossip, discussions, confrontation and other social control. Individuals are free to leave whenever they wish. But, if they do so, they expose themselves and their relatives as a topic for gossip or heavy sanctions. When there is a threat, bubbles become a comfort place to be in and Jews, within the Jewish community of Brussels, tend to close up in the bubble. When there is a perceived threat to the bubble by one of its members, the community tends to demand the person to leave. One rare example happened in Brussels when a Jewish woman married an Iranian man: she faced criticism and was asked not to come to activities organised by a Jewish institution.

Language gives meaning:

Language is one of the main difficulties individuals face when they strive to integrate into a new society. Many Israeli women who arrive in Belgium do not speak any of the two official languages: French or Dutch. Not knowing the language creates difficulties in creating social and personal relationships with non-Israeli individuals, i.e. the Belgian Jews. Moreover, when Israelis speak among themselves they often use military idioms that make it very difficult for people who did not serve in the army to understand, even if they speak Hebrew. In addition non-spoken language is not always known and might create unpleasant situations.

Lili, 36 years old:

There is the language barrier. I can't speak fluently. I can be myself when I speak Hebrew, and less so when I speak English. If I can't show myself, how can I get in touch?

Time:

The aspect of time is important in the Ultra-Orthodox enclaves as it determines relationships (Holiday meals, Sabbath, social events, etc.) and the daily schedule for prayers and study. In the Israeli bubble, the perception of time is not rigid, and does not determine relationships between individuals.

Interaction with the outer society:

For the Ultra-Orthodox enclaves, exiting the enclave is done mainly to try and change the outer world. The community in the enclave is against the outer world and sees it as impure, dirty and dangerous (Sivan, 1991). The

community does not seek any influence from the outside world. Media is forbidden and the computer is limited to professional purposes. Longman (2007, 2008) describes the difficulties orthodox Jewish women face when they work in a non-Jewish environment.

By contrast, for individuals who live in a bubble, the outer world is nearby and approachable. There is the possibility to be influenced by it or to reject it. It is transparent. Staying in the bubble despite all the outer influences is due to a deep need for a sense of belonging and reinforcement of identity. In the secular bubble, transferring Judaism is done through schools and events and not by rigid roles, norms and sanctions. Television and other media, including social media, are very important – the latter determines and exhibits relationships in the bubbles. In some cases the media is used to the benefit of the whole community; for example, in cases of anti-Semitic events, the community uses this platform to address topics that are related to the Jewish community and Israel to the society around.

Friendships:

Relationships in the Israeli group are very strong. For many Israeli women friendships replace family. The need to find a place of belonging upon arrival accelerates creation of relationships. Some of the Israelis interviewed expressed how important it was to quickly develop a sense of feeling at home. The following testimonies express the importance of friendships in the process of creating a new home:

Limor, 37 years old:

Here friendships are very strong because of the lack of family. I think that someone who has family here can't understand this . . . It is another type of friendship. The lack of family creates very special relationships, very strong relationships in a relatively very short time. You can meet someone and three months afterwards it could be a very strong friendship, something that in Israel would take much more time. There is this acceleration due to the lack of family and the need to find a different family for you and your family.

Rotem, a 40-year old woman, expresses another side of being on temporary base in Belgium.

If I know that a woman is leaving tomorrow, I assume I will have something that will block me from getting too close to her. She won't be here. It could be an overseas friendship but it is not the same.

From the Belgian Jewish point of view, Belgian Jewish women perceive Israelis as living in a closed group 'here and there'. Israelis are viewed as living temporarily in Belgium; therefore, the perceived feeling for the female

Israeli interviewees is that not much effort is made to integrate new Israeli migrants into the Belgian Jewish community.

Mina, 38 years old, explains;

Israeli friends? No, I don't have. [...] Maybe it is because the Israelis are also gathering between themselves. First of all, there is the practical part; they speak Hebrew between themselves. Sometimes people are not here with both feet; they have one foot in Israel and one in Belgium. It is also that life makes us run and run. Friends I have now are old friends from school. It is true that I have not developed any relationships. In the sense of community maybe there are two communities. There is a link to my friends from school. And on top, you have close friends because you have a common language.

My research shows that the Jewish community in Brussels is not a proximal host for most Israelis who immigrate to the city. Nevertheless, Jewish women who arrived in Brussels from other countries find the Jewish community a proximal host and are less likely to create their own bubbles. In many cases, they tend to integrate into the existing bubbles in the Jewish community.

These findings, of Israelis who are not fully integrated into the local Jewish community and do not feel part of it, are not new and were previously discussed by Roker (2008), Brent (2009), Lev-Ari (2008), Cohen (2008) and others. Israeli women, who tried to get social contacts with the Belgian Jewish women, expressed frustration as it did not always work and contacts remained superficial. Formation of distinct social groups is one way for the Israelis in Brussels to ensure continuation: Israelis preserve the notion of being temporarily in a foreign land in order to preserve the Israeli identity.

Education:

Israeli children in Brussels mostly frequent two schools. One is a Jewish school and the other is an International school. Israeli children in both schools have special Hebrew courses either on Sundays or at school in a separate programme. The focus here is on Israelis in a Jewish school as it is interesting to see how bubbles are constructed within a bubble. Israeli children are named "Israelis" and are considered Israelis by their teachers despite the fact that very few were actually born in Israel. Several 'Israeli children' have a Belgian parent.

The creation of the Israeli bubble is achieved by physical means as well as symbolic ones. The children leave their classes to join other Israeli children in a separate class where the surroundings are in Hebrew. They have special Hebrew lessons where the children are separated from their Belgian friends.

These Hebrew lessons are a social bubble for Israeli children. The teacher speaks uniquely in Hebrew and the children are also encouraged to do so. They have strong social relationships among them, they talk about Israel, bring up their experiences of the country, study with books that are in use in Israel, learn Israeli songs and watch Israeli movies. In addition, the programme is oriented toward the aim of immigrating to Israel.

Moreover, Israeli families often meet on different occasions: celebrating Holidays, travelling together and meeting each other beyond school time. It becomes a pseudo-family, a comfort area for the children.

One negative aspect of the bubble at school is the difficulty for many of the Israeli children to fully integrate, immerse and be part of the Belgian Jewish community. Keeping the children inside the Israeli bubble reinforces the temporary aspect of their stay.

Dynamic bubbles:

The above characteristics draw a dynamic picture of social bubbles versus enclaves. Bubbles can shrink, explode, disappear or be recreated. They are flexible, dynamic, big or small, separated or included in another. Social bubbles can disappear with time, when people move or leave the bubble; they can change form as individuals find different interests or relationships. The use of a more flexible term to describe the phenomenon of movement of people is more appropriate than a fixed and rigid term, especially when cultures and identities are not fixed, a somewhat hybrid, changeable and in constant motion. The concept of bubbles explains better relationships and meanings living side by side, in, with or separated from each other in one common place of residency.

Enclaves, on the other hand, describe a community that is static and keeps a relatively traditional, rigid, fixed identity. Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Manchester aim to keep their tradition. They do not want external influences.

Living in a bubble and a sense of belonging

Stories from Israel

Brent's (2009) observation that Israelis express a need to return to Israel once in a while and tend to take their vacations in Israel is valid in the case of Brussels. Many Israelis spend most of their vacations in Israel. Upon arrival, the frequency of visits is the highest but declines with the years Israelis live abroad. A few women described a temporary return to Israel as "...air to breathe".

When women come back to Brussels, they share stories about their experiences in Israel, including new restaurants they have visited and new places they have discovered. For the most part, the stories are very positive. Golbert (2010) found that positive stories about Israel transform it to a more tangible place among youth in Ukraine. It has the same effect on Israelis in Brussels. Stories about their experiences in Israel lead to a more positive social identity. This positive identity facilitates the group formation that, ultimately, forms an Israeli bubble.

Individuals who eventually returned to Israel continued to be part of the discourse among women, especially stories of success. The subject of returning to Israel is very common. Women talk about their wish to go back and live in Israel, even if there is no specific plan to do so in the near future. This exemplifies the temporary aspect of their stay in Belgium, for them, for their group members and for members of other bubbles.

Media

Consumption of media by new migrants is very high. New migrants watch news from their home country rather than local news from the country to which they have immigrated (Christiansen, 2004; Malka & Kama, 2011). Transnational communication provides migrants with an illusion of living elsewhere, to be non-permanents in their new country (Kastoryano, 2007; Malka & Kama, 2011). Malka and Kama (2011) show that, among Israelis in New Jersey, the consumption of Israeli media conserves and fosters identification with the Israeli experience. It provides the migrants a feeling of continuation and security as if they had not migrated; therefore, the geographic distance is not important. The different communication systems conserve the feeling of 'home' from afar. In bubbles like the ones of New Jersey or Brussels, Israelis are able to conserve a "pure Israeli identity" with little foreign influences. They are able to connect and reconnect to the world they left. While knowing what is new in Israel, they are able to discuss matters that are important for Israelis in Israel; in so doing, they create a feeling of continuation. Cohen (2008) sees diaspora media as maintaining the original culture and identities of the ethnic group. Featherstone (2000:65) explains that cinema, especially movies from the "home land," provides "a virtual space within an actual place." The movie brings a common experience, emotions and feelings of solidarity. Ethno-cultural identity and a connection to a specific land of origin nurtured from varied technologies (Lev-Ari, 2012).

In Brussels, many Israelis watch Israeli channels with Israeli series, news and information. The content is often a subject of conversation. Connecting to

Israeli TV creates continuity with life in Israel. Israelis declare their belonging to Israel. Cohen (2008) explains that in Australia Jewish radio helps to maintain an Israeli national identity. Feelings towards Israel, as presented in the broadcasts, Cohen analyses, is a mixture of wanting to leave Israel, to live elsewhere with a commitment to it and constant thoughts of return. In Brussels, different Israeli media channels, including virtual ones, play a prominent role in conserving and thereby strengthening the Israelis' identity.

Limor, 37 years old:

I am an Israeli. For me where I am today, the roots, the dominant part of mine is Israeli no matter how many years I lived in Israel. Today after looking at my emails I go to YNET to see what's going on in Israel. I don't see what happens in Belgium. I don't see what happens in the world. The first thing I want to know is what is happening in Israel.

Israeli artists, music, films and food

Several events were organized in Brussels with Israeli comedians, dancers, singers, painters and others. In some cases these performances are in Hebrew, and despite their being open to the public, the audience mainly consisted of Israelis. Here again, Israelis create a separation between themselves and the Belgian community. Bringing over Israeli actors and comedians is possible only due to the fact that many Israelis are connected to the life of Israelis in Israel, socially and culturally. Once again, Israelis created a sense of continuity with life in Israel, in some cases transferring this to their children as well.

Israeli music is very popular among Israelis and Belgian Jews. In many events, such as Bar Mitzvahs, weddings and so on, people dance to the sounds of Israeli music. Israeli artists are present in different occasions, such as the community celebrations of Israeli Independence Day, celebrations of holidays within the community, youth movement activities and in Jewish schools. The music is yet another way to transport a person to another place. Israeli music declares boundaries that provide a place where experiences and emotions are shared. It takes people away from where they are and creates new spaces. It creates a sense of 'home' when it brings memories, souvenirs and emotions. Singing Israeli songs together brings a sense of a strong communality, a strong sense of home and belonging.

Food is another example of bringing Israel to Belgium, especially that in Jewish culture food has an important place in the various Jewish Holidays and traditions. Israelis, in many cases, enjoy the great variety of restaurants in Brussels but, nevertheless, Israeli food is a strong part of the Israeli identity. Despite the fact that Israelis try new ways of cooking and enjoy good cuisine,

there are a few special items of Israeli food that they bring when they go to Israel for a visit. One of them is an Israeli delight named Milki or Israeli cottage cheese. While trying to explore novelty and strangeness in the new place of residence, food brings the known to the unknown and creates the feeling of home. Food brings along smells, looks and taste in exactly the same way it does to the tourist (in the analysis of Cohen, 1972). It is a celebration for several senses in transforming a 'place' into a 'home'.

Discussion

Identity constructs and reconstructs via the relations individuals have with other groups, by living in varied situations and through intercultural exchange. In the traditional society, individuals do not think of their identity, as it is given to the individual and remains throughout the person's life, assuming that the person continues to live in the same village. In the post-modern era, and in modern societies, these situations become rare. People move from one society to another and from one culture to another; therefore, influences on personal identity are great. For example, Fukuyama (2007) found that when Muslims leave traditional societies, identity becomes problematic as they face non-Muslim values and cultures. The question of authenticity arises as a gap between the inner identity of the person and the behaviour of the individual. Individuals have to construct and reconstruct, to form and reform varied aspects of their identity.

Social identity means belonging to a certain group or to a social category. Living in a closed society, named here 'the social bubble', has an important influence on the identity of the individual. In Brussels it seems to me that Jewish identity is very strong among Israeli women. In the last few years there has been a tendency for women to connect to their Jewish identity, sometimes via their children going to a Jewish school and on other occasions by taking some traditions and customs from Judaism. Jewish identity revives and receives a new meaning and new importance within the varied identities experienced by Israeli women in Brussels. Turning to religious institutions and/or rituals and ceremonies is done in order to reach certain familiarity in a new place.

In general, Israeli women who come to Belgium seek ways to create a new 'home' in a foreign place. A woman has a very important role in integrating her family into the new place (Lev-Ari, 2008). One mechanism they use is the creation of social bubbles where they bring Israel back into their lives in a foreign land. Living in an Israeli bubble provides the possibility of being 'here' but to live 'there' and to create a clear identity. It prevents the possibility of living 'in between'. Having news information from Israel, watching Israeli TV, eating Israeli food and reading Israeli literature all belie the wish of Israelis to return to Israel. Not all Israelis have manifest plans of

return but it is a frequently discussed topic. For the most part it remains a theoretical discussion. Israeli TV preserves and pampers the identification with the Israeli experience and a sense of belonging to Israel. It allows feelings of continuity and security.

The Jewish community of Brussels does not act as a proximal host to the Israelis. Separation of Israelis from the Jewish community has been found in many other countries. Roker (2008), Ilani (2008) and Brent (2009) found that Israelis in England and France do not feel part of the Jewish community; they do not feel connected and even refuse to have any contact. In some cases, like in Canada, Israelis created separate social networks similar to the creation of the Israeli bubble in Brussels. In many cases, Israelis feel barriers with the local Jewish community; they feel ambivalent feelings towards the local Jewish community. Mittelberg and Waters (1992) explain that Israelis in America do not want to join the Jewish community and do not identify themselves as Jewish American.

For Maier (2007:68), group identities construct boundary conditions, a cultivated awareness of qualities that separate 'us' from 'them'. This is a special condition that contributes to an identity formation. Israelis and Belgian Jews use different ways to create this separation between the groups. In order to create a positive social identity, both Jewish women and Israelis compare themselves to other groups. Israeli women compare themselves to Belgian Jews. In most cases, the comparison is negative, which means that they create a positive social identity to their own group and they identify with their social group while highlighting negative aspects of the 'other group'. This comparison strengthens their identity. It separates 'us' from 'them' and reinforces Israeli identity.

When migrant women arrive to a new place, they search for relationships through which they create their new home. They fill this home with new experiences, new memories, novelty but it remains a 'safe' surrounding for them and for their family. They create a secured place where norms, values and behavioural codes are known. Interestingly, minority groups, such as Jews in Brussels, behave similarly. They also create bubbles, although their comparison group is the general Belgian society and not the Israeli one. This bubble provides security, but especially a sense of belonging, a sense of familiarity. It creates a 'home' in Belgium. Strangely enough, it is by being separated from the wider society that migrants can create their home and feel a sense of belonging in the new place of residency.

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Endnotes

- [1] This article is drawn from larger anthropological research about the Jewish community of Brussels. The focus of the research is on identity formation among migrant Jewish women.
- [2] Eruv is the symbolic creation of a closure of a city by the creation of a fence or thin ropes in order to create one environment, so religious people will be able to carry things and take them out of their house during Sabbath and Holidays. The lines of the Eruv are fixed wires that cannot be changed all the time.
- [3] The above-mentioned scholars researched the relationships between the Jewish community and the Israelis who arrive to the country. This Ph.D. research is the first on this topic to be conducted in Belgium.
- [4] In Brussels.
- [5] A Jewish school.
- [6] For example, it might be difficult to marry the individuals' siblings.
- [7] The French language.
- [8] Sivan (1993) explains that in some fundamental groups going out to the outer world is seen as too dangerous and they prefer not to approach these temptations of the outer worlds. Valins (2003) describes similar perceptions of the Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Manchester.
- [9] Jewish women who arrived from France, where they share the same language, feel closer to the local Jewish community and describe a better feeling of integration.
- [10] For example, books, class decoration, etc.
- [11] An Israeli news website.
- [12] Milki is a chocolate and cream-based dessert.